

Vignettes of Winnipeg: Past and Present

The Manitoba Legislative Building-450 Broadway

The present Manitoba Legislative Building is the third to house the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. The Assembly first met in 1871 in the home of Andrew G.B. Bannatyne, *Braeside*, a large log structure at Main and McDermot.

In 1883 an Italianate structure was built on Kennedy Street near Government House. By 1912 this building was deemed to be both out-dated and inadequate. Manitoba had just expanded to its present dimensions, immigrants were pouring in, and both the province and its capital city were booming. A grander seat of government was needed to reflect this spectacular growth.

In 1911 the Manitoba Government purchased a 30 acre tract of land, part of the Fort Osborne Barracks, from the Federal Government, and the next year advertized a contest, asking architects to submit designs. The prize was \$ 10,000. The winning design was that of Frank Worthington Simon and Henry Boddington III of Liverpool.

The architects' conception exhibited the neo-classical style popular at time throughout North America. The basic structure is Tyndall stone, quarried locally. It is topped by a copper dome of Greek design on which the iconic "Golden Boy" strides into the future, the north, holding a sheaf of wheat and a torch.



Scene from a New Year's Levee at the Levee.



New Year's Day-Choir at the Levee



New Year's Day-Sleigh rides at the Levee



Broadway Bears on south lawn of Leg in 2008

A local historian, Frank Alba has done a detailed study of the buildings dimensions, sculptures, carvings, murals, and has concluded that it was designed to be a re-creation of the temple of Solomon, rife with Masonic symbolism. His book, *The Hermetic Code*, expounds this theory.

The original estimated cost of construction, \$ 2 million grew as building progressed. In 1915 a Royal Commission was called to investigate. It found many irregularities and a lack of appropriate oversight. As a result, the premier of the time, Sir Rodmond Roblin, resigned in May, 1915. Scrutiny focused on the chief contractor, Thomas Kelly, who was eventually charged with theft and fraud.

Today the building is priceless. It is the site of protests, ceremonies, and celebrations. On New Year's Day the Lieutenant Governor hosts a levee that is attended by thousands. Members of the Manitoba Branch of the UEL and the Living History Society attend in costume. Visitors are entertained by various choirs and sleigh rides are available for a tour of the grounds.

On Canada Day in 2011 citizens gathered to don red and white tee-shirts to create the country's largest human flag.

In 2010 the Legislature played host to one of the original copies of the Magna Carta, to mark the Queen's symbolic laying of the cornerstone of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, a stone brought from the field of Runnymede.

At night the flood-lit dome lights the sky like a beacon of hope, a reminder that our forebears in this province built not for today, but for all times.



Canada Day at the Leg, forming the human flag



View of the Leg from walkway from Government House

Source: *Street of Dreams-The Story of Broadway*-Marjorie Gillies.

Take virtual tours at: www.gov.mb.ca/legtour.

Hermetic Tour at: <http://www.manitoba-eh.ca/legislative-virtual-tour.htm>.



Ice sculpture commemorating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. It was installed over the weekend of Feb 4 and 5, and unveiled on Monday February 6, 2012.